

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the specification as follows. Please replace the paragraph at page 16, beginning at line 7 and ending at line 17 with the following paragraph:

--A hydrogel may be formed by adding a solute such as gelatin to water at an elevated temperature to dissolve gelatin. The solution is then cooled and the solute(s) (e.g., solid gelatin components) form submicroscopic crystalline particle groups which retain a great deal of water in the interstices (so-called "brush-heap" structure). Methods of making hydrogels suitable for use in the present invention are well-known to those of skill in the art. See, for example, the disclosures of U.S. Pat. No. 4,646,730 to Schonfeld et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 5,013,769 to Murray et al.; U.S. Pat. No. 4,659,700 to Jackson et al.; and U.S. Pat. No. 4,909,244 to Quarfoot et al., the teachings of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entireties. An example of a hydrogel suitable for use in an embodiment of the invention is AVOGEL® (solid hydrogel with 60-90% water entrapped in a crosslinked hydrophobic polymer network), available from Avocet Polymer Technologies, Inc., Chicago, Ill.--